

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

My visions the soul becomes more humble, knowing herself better and despising her own vileness. In the visions of the enemy the opposite happens ; for, since he is the father of lies, and the king over all the children of pride, and cannot give save what he has, from his visions there ever results in the soul a certain self-esteem or presumption on herself, which is the proper office of pride, and she remains swollen and puffed up. Thou, then, by ever examining thyself diligently, wilt be able to consider whence the vision has come, whether from the truth or from the lie ; for truth always makes the soul humble, but the lie makes her proud."¹ And again, when she prayed for strength against these assaults : " Daughter, if thou wouldst acquire the virtue of fortitude, thou must needs imitate Me. Albeit I could by My divine virtue annihilate all the power of the enemy, and take another way to conquer him, nevertheless, because I wished with My human actions to give an example to you, I would not conquer save by the way of the Cross, in order to teach you by deed as well as word. If you would become strong, to overcome every power of the enemy, take the Cross for your consolation, even as I did, *who* (as My Apostle says) *having joy set before Me endured the Cross*, in order that you may choose not only patiently to bear pains and afflictions, but even to embrace them as consolations. And, verily, they are consolations ; for the more you bear such things for My sake, the more do you make yourselves like to Me ; for *as you are partakers of the sufferings*^ it follows, according to the teaching of My Apostle, that *so shall you be also of the consolation*. Receive then, My daughter, the sweet things as bitter, and the bitter things as sweet, for My sake ; and fear nothing henceforth, for certainly for all things thou shalt be strong." ²

There came a time, towards the end of these three years, when these assaults and temptations became horrible and unbearable. Aerial men and women, with obscene words and still more obscene gestures, seemed to invade her little cell, sweeping round her like the souls of the damned in Dante's Hell, inviting

¹ *Legenda*, I. ix. 4 (§ 85).

² *Ibid.*, I. xi. I (§ 104).